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Spencer et al.

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[54] **PORTABLE GOLF CART COVER AND METHOD OF MANUFACTURE THEREFOR**

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[21] Appl. No.: **28,129**

[22] Filed: **Mar. 9, 1993**

[51] **Int. Cl.**[6] **B60J 9/00**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **296/77.1**; 296/79

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 296/77.1, 79, 102; 280/DIG. 5; 24/68 CD, 459, 462, 522

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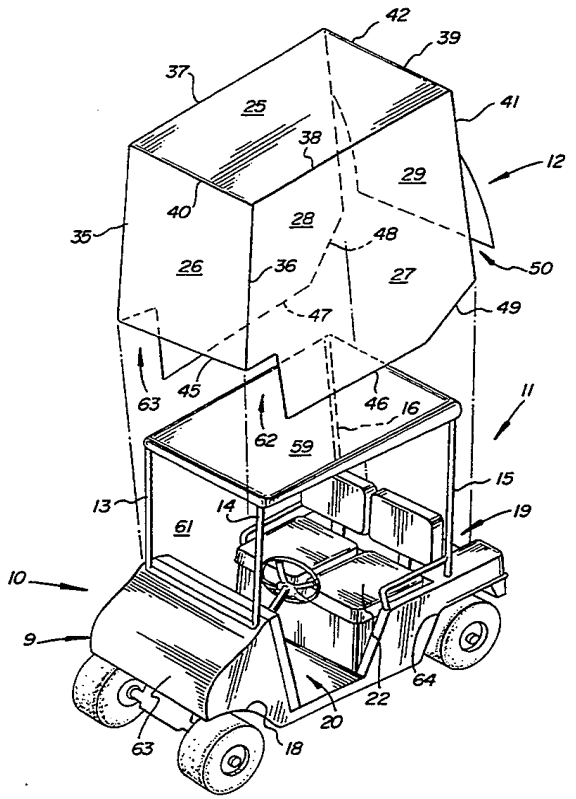
[57] **ABSTRACT**

A portable golf cart cover which is made of a lightweight flexible material may be folded to a compact size for storage in a golf club bag. The cover is easily attached to and removed from any golf cart of the type having a roof. The cover requires a minimal number of attachment means, thereby enabling easy access to the cabin and golf club compartment. The cover may be manufactured by joining three sections using an adhesive or by heat sealing.

31 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



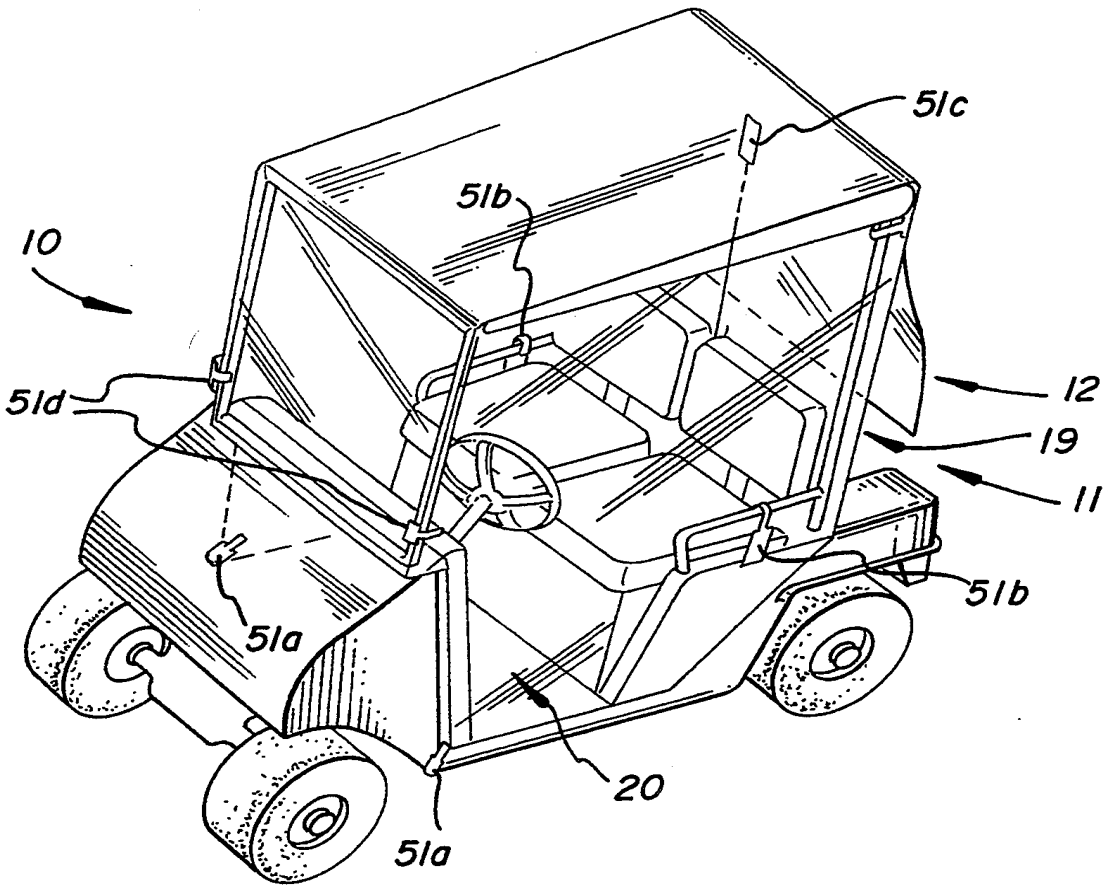


Fig. 1

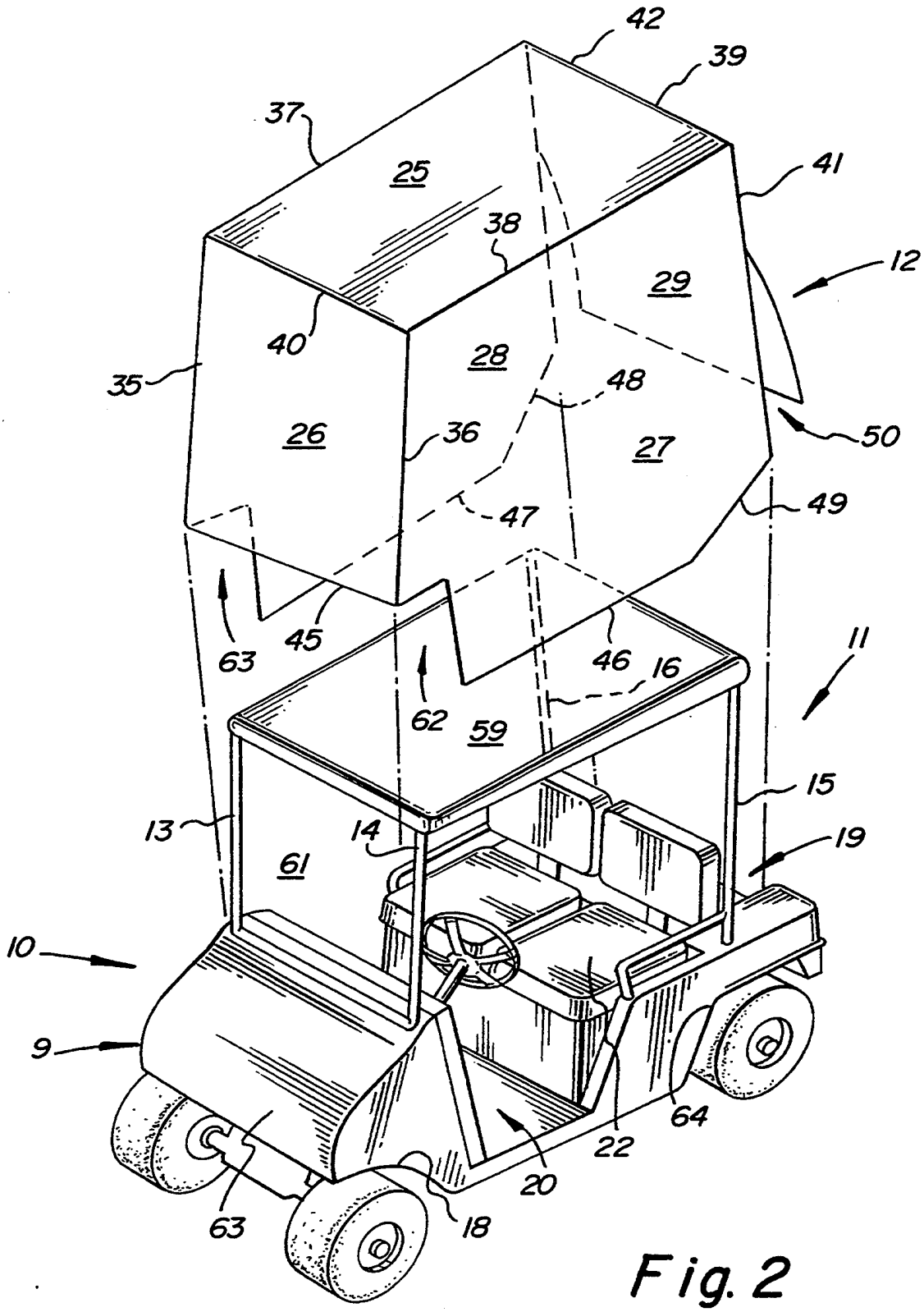

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Fig. 2

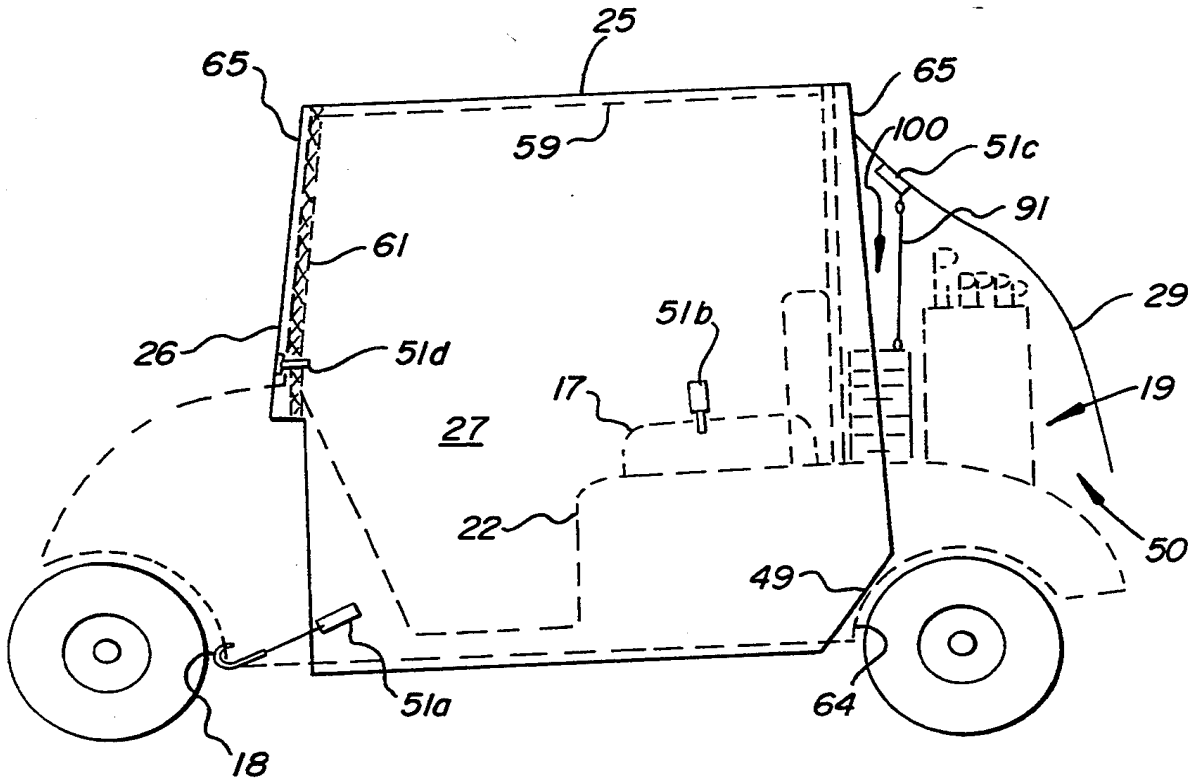
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Fig. 3

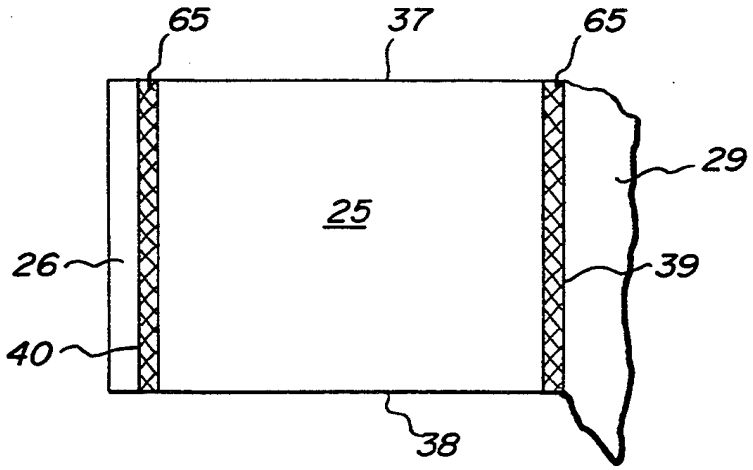
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Fig. 4

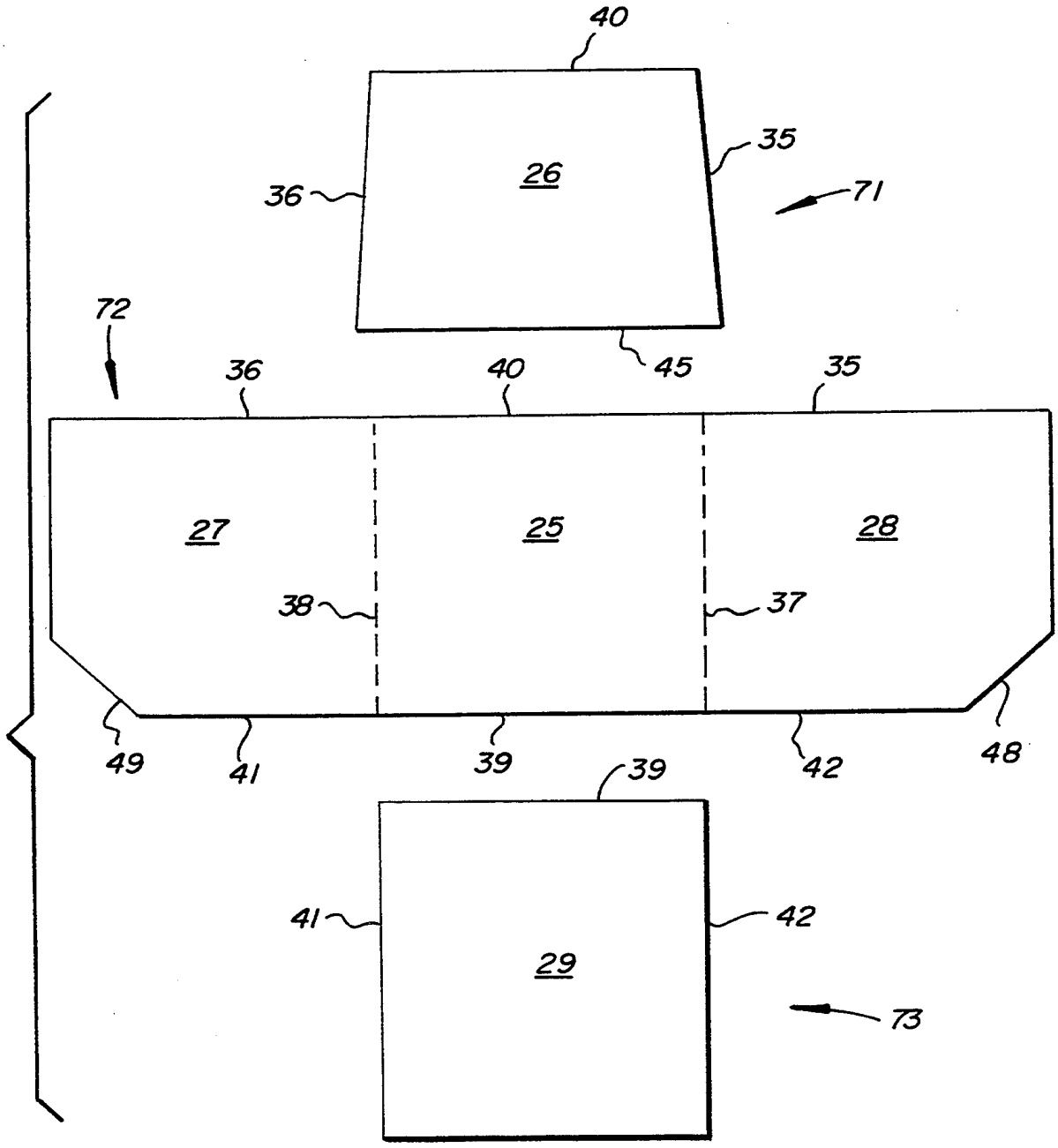
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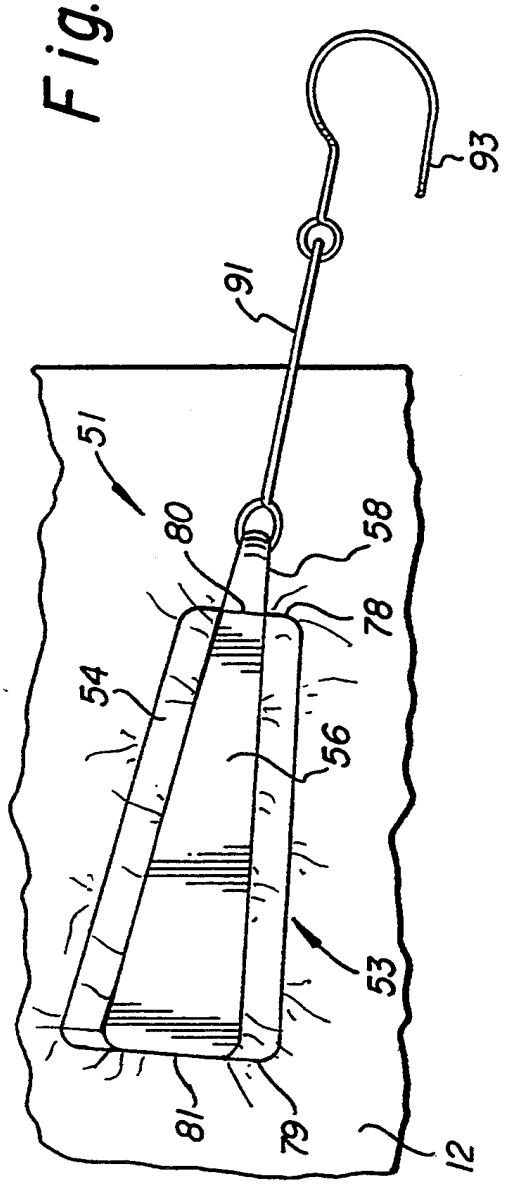
Fig. 5

Fig. 6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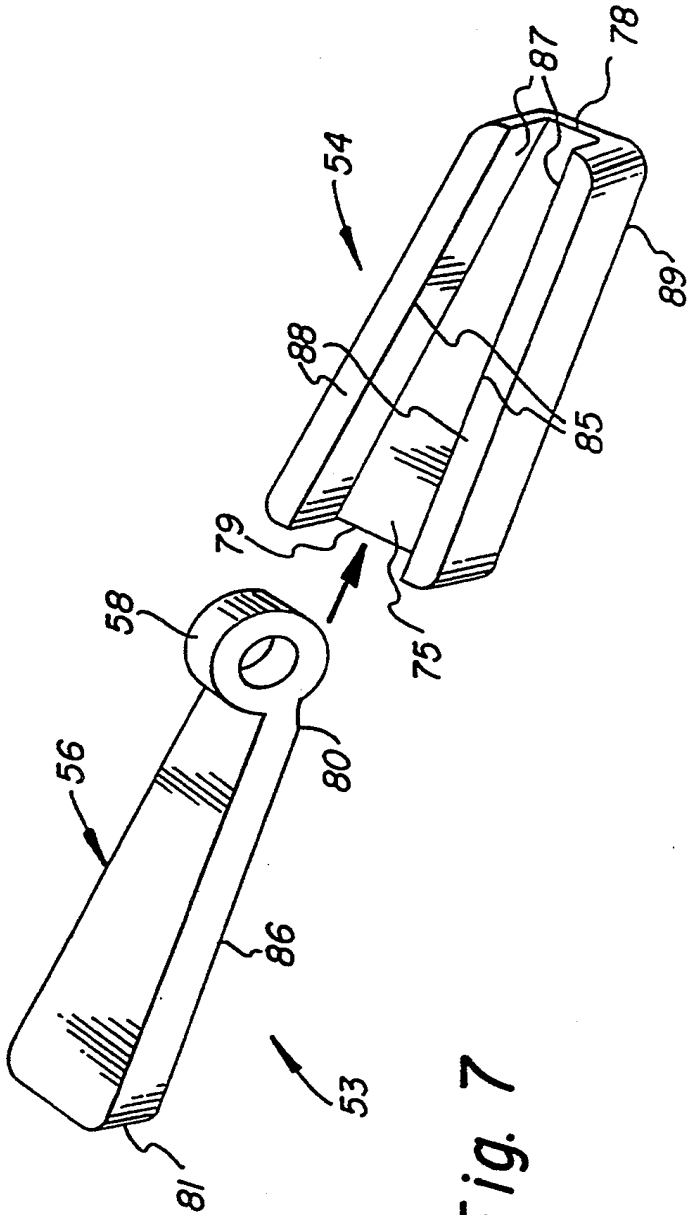
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Fig. 7

PORTABLE GOLF CART COVER AND METHOD OF MANUFACTURE THEREFOR

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a golf cart cover and, more particularly, to a lightweight, portable golf cart cover.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Golf has become a year-round sport which is played in numerous countries throughout the world. Because of the popularity of the sport, it is often necessary to reserve course time at least several days in advance. Moreover, as in any sport, the players generally prefer to set aside a particular time during the week, or even during the month, for the activity. Thus, it is often the case that golfers will play in less than ideal weather conditions rather than reschedule their game.

During inclement weather, the roof of a golf cart will provide some protective cover for golfers seated in the cabin section. On a rainy day, however, it is also preferable to use a golf cart cover to shield the cabin section from rain blowing through the open sides, front and back of the cart and also to protect any golfing equipment placed in the back of the cart. Various types of portable golf cart covers are commercially available. These covers are typically comprised of several panels of a water-repellant material such as canvas or tarpaulin. A window, made of a transparent plastic material, is provided in at least the front panel for purposes of visibility. The panels may be joined to one another and to the windows by sewing or with heavy-duty zippers. These covers are usually attached to the cart by means of hooks and/or clips. Access into and out of the cart is afforded by an opening in at least one of the side walls. Typically, the opening is held closed by means of a heavy-duty zipper or snaps.

Although most of these golf cart covers provide adequate protection from the rain, they have numerous drawbacks. For example, canvas and tarpaulin are relatively heavyweight materials, having a thickness on the order of at least 12 mils, which prohibits folding a cover constructed of this material to a size which is compact and easy to transport and store. Moreover, folding the cover up and onto the roof when not in use tends to given an unsightly appearance. Because the material is heavyweight, panels must be joined by sewing them together or by sewing in zippers, all of which leads to high manufacturing costs. The stitching may eventually weaken and tear, and zippers often stick or even break. In addition to being bulky, a canvas or tarpaulin cover weighs an average of 12–15 pounds and can be quite costly to purchase. Canvas or tarpaulin also has a tendency to become discolored from soiling and moldy if not allowed to dry completely before folding.

Yet another disadvantage of the prior art golf cart covers is that the means for attachment of the cover to the cart can be cumbersome. Typically, the covers are secured by attaching hooks or clips, located along the bottom edges of the cover and permanently affixed thereto, to the underside of the cart. When the cover is attached to the underside of the cart, access to the passenger compartment is awkward and somewhat limited. Moreover, many of the new unibody golf cart constructions do not have a protruding edge or structure on the underside to enable attachment of all hooks or clips.

Others have previously attempted to overcome one or more of these drawbacks. U.S. Pat. No. 4,098,536 to Mills, for example, discloses a weathershield for golf carts which, when not in use, may be folded and packed into a pouch for storage. The shield may be constructed of a transparent plastic material. However, the use of a heavy-duty zipper in at least one side wall necessitates the use of a relatively heavyweight material. The shield must be secured at intervals around the outside body of the cart by clamps, hooks, and/or snaps.

U.S. Pat. No. 4,013,315 to West discloses a rain curtain assembly for a golf cart comprised of a plurality of panels which are compressible into a small package when not in use. However, assembly of the curtain tends to be somewhat complex, requiring tie cords for securing the panels and suction cups and hook means to attach the curtain to the golf cart. Moreover, cloth binding must be sewn onto the panels to provide strength and shape.

Accordingly, the need exists to provide an improved, cost effective, portable golf cart cover made of a lightweight, yet durable, material, the cover being easily mounted on and attached to any golf cart having a roof and foldable to a compact size when not in use.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Thus, it is a purpose of the present invention to overcome the disadvantages of the prior art and thereby provide a relatively inexpensive, lightweight, portable golf cart cover.

In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention there is provided a portable cover for a golf cart comprising: a roof panel, opposed side panels, a front panel, and a back panel, all panels being of a lightweight material sufficiently light and flexible to enable the cover to be folded to a compact size and shape when not in use, the weight of the cover being no more than 8 pounds. Preferably the cover may be folded to dimensions of $10 \times 12 \times 2.5$ inches and has a total weight of no more than 4 pounds.

Preferably, the panels are joined together using adhesives or heat sealing, in the absence of stitching, zippers, or other material intrusive means. Also, access to the interior of the cart is preferably provided solely by a separation between each of the side panels and the back panel. A preferred attachment means enables the attachment of the cover to fender wells, handles on the golf cart, and to a suitable structure at the rear of the cart using, for example, a clip which is moveable to various positions on the cover, the clip being joined to a hook by a flexible strip of material.

According to a preferred method of manufacturing the portable golf cart cover, three sections of a flexible transparent material having a thickness ranging from 2 to 12 mils, most preferably 6 mils, are joined by means of an adhesive such as a double-sided tape or by heat sealing.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a portable golf cart cover which is cost-effective and made of a lightweight material which can be stored compactly and installed on all carts provided with roofs and which is also transparent to enable optimum visibility.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a portable golf cart cover requiring a minimum number of attachment means, thereby enabling easy access to the cabin and golf club compartment. In addition, because of few attachments required, the time to

secure cover to cart is less than required for existing covers.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a method of making a golf cart cover using adhesives or heat sealing, thereby avoiding the problems associated with stitching, zippers or other material intrusive means.

These and other objects of the present invention will become apparent from the detailed description to follow.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

There follows a detailed description of the preferred embodiments of the present invention which are to be taken together with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of a golf cart having a portable golf cart cover in accordance with the present invention mounted thereon;

FIG. **2** is a perspective view of a golf cart similar to FIG. **1** but showing the golf cart cover raised above the cart for purposes of illustration;

FIG. **3** is a side view of the golf cart and cover, with the golf cart shown in dashed lines and the cover shown in solid lines.

FIG. **4** is a top plan view of the assembled golf cart cover, with the cart omitted.

FIG. **5** shows the individual panels used in the preferred assembly of the golf cart cover;

FIG. **6** is a top view of an attachment means for attaching the golf cart cover to the golf cart; and

FIG. **7** is a perspective view of a moveable clip used in the attachment means shown in FIG. **6**.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring now to the figures, like elements are represented by like numerals throughout the several views.

Referring to FIG. **1**, a golf cart with a portable cover thereon is represented generally at **10**. The golf cart itself is designated by the numeral **11** and the portable cover by the numeral **12**. The cover **12** is sized to completely enclose both the cabin **20** and golf club compartment **19**, thereby providing a weathershield for both passengers and golfing equipment. The cover **12** may be attached to the cart **11** by any suitable means, such as by placing grommets at various positions in the cover **12** and then attaching hooks at appropriate locations along the cart **11** as needed. However, the cover **12** is most preferably held in place by attachment means **51***a–d* which will be discussed in further detail in conjunction with FIGS. **6–8** below.

Referring also to FIG. **2**, which shows the golf cart cover **12** raised above the golf cart for purposes of illustration, the cover **12** is comprised of a roof panel **25**, opposed side panels **27, 28**, a front panel **26** and a back panel **29**. The roof panel **25** lies on top of the roof **59** of the golf cart **11** which typically extends over the entire cabin **20** and is mounted on the base **9** of the cart **11** by supporting posts **13, 14** at the front of the cart **11** and by supporting posts **15, 16** at the back of the cart **11**. When the cover **12** is mounted on the cart **11**, access to the cabin **20** and golf club compartment **19** is provided solely by a separation **50** between the back panel **29** and each of the side panels **27, 28**.

The front panel **26** is permanently joined to the roof panel **25** at meeting edges **40** and to the side panels **27, 28** at meeting edges **36, 35**, respectively. The front panel **26** is sized to cover the front window **61** of the cart **11**.

If the front window **61** is equipped with a windshield made of an acrylic such as Plexiglas ® or other suitable material, no front panel attachment is necessary. However, if the front window **61** is open, the front panel **26** should be attached to the cart **11**, and is most preferably attached to the supporting posts **13, 14** by attachment means **51***d*. This attachment is necessary in order to keep the front panel **26** taut.

The opposed side panels **27, 28** are permanently joined to the roof panel **25** at meeting edges **38, 37**, respectively. As best shown in FIG. **3**, the side panels **27, 28** are preferably attached to the base **9** of the cart **11** by attachment means **51***a* which join the front corners **62, 63** to the front fender wells **18** and by attachment means **51***b* which join the back corners **48, 49** to handles **17** adjacent the seats **22**. Alternatively, the back corners **48, 49** may be attached to the back fender wells **64**. Because the attachment means **51***a* or **51***b* attach to the fender wells **18, 64** or the handles **17**, respectively, the golf cart cover **12** does not require a rim or other structure at the base of the cart **11** to secure the attachment means.

The back panel **29** is permanently joined to the roof panel **25** at meeting edges **39**. The back panel **29** may be partially joined to the side panels **27, 28** at meeting edges **41, 42**, respectively. However, the separation **50** must be provided in order to enable the side panels **27, 28** to be lifted to gain access to the cabin **20**. The separation **50** between the back panel **29** and side panels **27, 28** also allows the back panel **29** to be lifted to gain access to the golf club compartment **19**. Attachment of the back panel **29** to a structure, such the golf bag holding means or the cart basket **100** as shown in FIG. **3**, using an attachment means **51***c* is necessary to secure the cover **12** on the cart **11** at the rear.

The materials utilized for the cover **12** are relatively thin and lightweight. The cover may, for example, primarily comprise an opaque material, but include a transparent material for the front panel **26**. However, it is preferable to use a single transparent lightweight material such as a clear vinyl. Lightweight vinyls are commercially available from companies such as Global Plastics Co. in New York and Environmental Products in Illinois. "Transparent" materials are not limited to those which are perfectly clear, but include any materials which allow visibility from the inside of the cart to the outside. Because vinyl materials are typically purchased on a roll, assembly of the cover **12** is easiest and most cost effective when the material is cut into three sections **71, 72, 73** as shown in FIG. **5**, although other methods of assembly are within the scope of the invention. The first section **71** comprises the front panel **26**, the second section **72** comprises the roof panel **25** and the opposed side panels **27, 28**, and the third section **73** comprises the back panel **29**. Generally, the width of a roll of vinyl material is about **54** inches. Thus, in a preferred embodiment, sections **71, 72** and **73** are formed, respectively, by cutting a 54- by 44-inch strip of the material and removing 5- by 44-inch triangular sections from the side edges so that the top edge **40** is 44 inches and the bottom edge **45** is **54** inches, cutting a 54- by 168-inch strip of the material and removing 14- by 14-inch triangular sections from the corners **48, 49**, and cutting a 60- by 54-inch strip of the material. The use of a lightweight material allows the sections **71, 72, 73** to be permanently joined by adhesives or heat sealing, thus

eliminating the need for stitching or other material intrusive means. In a preferred embodiment, the sections are joined by a double-sided, plasticizer-resistant, industrial grade, adhesive tape which is commercially available from 3M Company.

Generally, the material used for the cover **12** should also be sufficiently flexible to enable the cover **12** to be folded to a compact size and shape such that it can be stored in a golf bag when not in use. Vinyl materials are particularly advantageous because they are less likely to develop mold than are the canvas and tarpaulin materials which are typically utilized for golf cart covers. Thus, in a preferred embodiment of the invention, the cover is made from a 2 to 12 mil vinyl, weighing not more than 8 pounds. Even more preferably, the cover is made of a 6 mil vinyl, having a total weight of no more than 4 pounds, which can be folded to dimensions of $10\times12\times2.5$ inches.

As shown in FIG. **5**, section **71** is preferably cut in the shape of a polygon having a bottom edge **45** of greater width than the top edge **40** and side edges **35, 36** of equal length. This type of cut allows the front panel **26** to more readily conform to the angular shape of the front window of a golf cart as seen from the side view of the cover **12** shown in FIG. **3**. Referring to section **72**, corners **49, 48** at the back lower edge of the side panels **27, 28**, respectively, are also preferably cut at an angle to prevent the cover **12** from becoming entangled with the rear wheels. Section **73**, forming back panel **29**, is essentially rectangular.

Meeting edges **35** and **36** of the front panel **26** and side panels **27** and **28** and meeting edges **41** and **42** of the back panel **29** and side panels **27** and **28** are attached by using a double-sided adhesive tape **65**. Similarly, FIG. **4** shows a top view of the golf cart cover **12** in which the meeting edges **39, 40** of the front and back panels **26, 29**, respectively, with the roof panel **25** are attached using the double-sided adhesive tape **65**.

Once the cover **12** is mounted on the cart **11**, the side panels **27, 28** may be attached to the base **9** using any appropriate attachment means **51***a* such as clips and hooks. FIG. **6** shows a top view of a preferred attachment means **51** comprised of a slide clip **53** and a hook **93** connected by a strip of material **91**. Typically, the moveable clips **53** are first attached to the cover **12** after it is mounted onto the cart **11**, followed by attachment of the hooks **93** at appropriate locations. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the back panel **29** is held in place by attaching a moveable clip **53** to the upper portion of the back panel **29** and the hook **93** to a suitable structure in the golf club compartment **19**. The connecting strip of material **91** should be a flexible material and extend down inside of back panel **29**. A Bungee cord is desirable because it is sufficiently flexible to enable attachment of the hook **93**, yet remains relatively taut when there is a wind gust, thereby preventing the back panel **29** from flying upward. It is preferable to utilize surgical tubing for attachment of the side panels to the fender wells **18, 64**; however, surgical tubing tends to be more flexible than a Bungee cord, thereby allowing the side panels to be lifted for access into and out of the cabin **20** without the need to detach the hooks **93** from the front fender wells **18**. Where the golf cart **11** is equipped with handles **17** adjacent the seats **22** as shown in FIG. **3**, it is desirable to use hook and loop fasteners, such as Velcro ®, for the strip of material **91** which may be looped around the handles **17**, thereby eliminating the need for a hook. Similarly, attachment means **51***d* may comprise moveable clips **53** attached to the front panel **26** with hook and loop fasteners attached to the cart **11** by looping the material **91** around supporting posts **13, 14**.

Thus, by attaching the cover **12** as described above, the total number of attachment means **51***a–d* required for attachment to a cart having a windshield is 5 and is for attachment to a cart without a windshield is 7. Moreover the moveable clips **53** may be attached anywhere on the cover **12** to correspond to the most desireable positions for attachment on the cart **11**.

FIG. **7** shows a perspective view of the moveable clip **53** of FIG. **6**. Moveable clips **53** used in accordance with the present invention are commercially available from the Griffolyn Company, Inc. The moveable clips **53** are comprised of top and bottom pieces **56, 54**, respectively. The bottom piece **54** has a recess **75** extending across its length and open at both ends **78, 79**. End **78** is narrower in width than end **79**. The top piece **56** conforms to the shape of the recess **75**, and is, therefore, narrower at end **80** than at end **81** to prevent piece **56** from sliding out of end **78** when pressure is applied via the strip of material **91** attached to eyelet **58** during attachment of the cover **12** to the cart **11**. The sides **87** of the recess **75** are also angled slightly outward from the top **88** to the base **89** to hold the top piece **56** securely in the bottom piece **54**. The clip **53** is attached to the cover **12** by placing the cover **12** between pieces **54** and **56** and sliding piece **56** into piece **54** in the direction indicated by the arrow, such that ends **80** and **78** and ends **75** and **81** are substantially contiguous. Edges **85** and **86** of pieces **54** and **56**, respectively, are rounded to prevent the cover **12** from being torn. The moveable clips **53** are advantageous because their design allows them to be used on thick or thin materials. Thus, because a relatively thin material is contemplated for manufacture of the cover **12**, it is possible to fold up the side panels **27, 28**, and attach the clips **53** onto several folded layers of material. In this manner, it is possible to hold up the side panels **27, 28**, for example on a hot day, to allow air to circulate through the cabin **20**.

Other advantages of the present invention are that the cover, when made of a single transparent vinyl material, provides excellent visibility from all sides. Vinyl materials are generally very flexible and will retain their shape even after stretching, thereby allowing the cover to be stretched tightly around the cart to provide a weatherproof seal. Because the cover completely encloses the cart except for slits between the back and side panels, it can be used to keep heat inside the cabin on a cold day. Both material and manufacturing costs are relatively low compared to conventional golf cart covers.

Although the invention has been described in considerable detail with respect to preferred embodiments thereof, variations and modifications will be apparent to those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the claims.

We claim:

1. A cover for a golf cart of the type having a roof over a cabin section of the cart, wherein the cover rests on the roof, comprising:

a roof panel,

opposed side panels connected to the roof panel,

a front panel connected to the roof panel, and

a rear panel connected to the roof panel,

the panels, to the extent that they are not formed as one piece with adjacent panels, being connected together by a plasticizer resistant adhesive in the

form of a double-sided adhesive tape, such that the entire cover, including the joints, can be readily folded into a compact size and shape for compact storage.

2. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 1, wherein the material of the cover is transparent.

3. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 1, wherein the weight of the cover is no more than four pounds.

4. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 1, wherein the material of the cover is a 2 to 12 mil vinyl.

5. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 4, wherein the material of the cover is approximately 6 mil vinyl.

6. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 1, wherein the cover may be folded to dimensions of approximately $10\times12\times2.5$ inches.

7. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 1, wherein the roof panel and the opposed side panels are formed from a single piece of material.

8. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 7, wherein a top edge of the front panel is joined to a front edge of the roof panel, side edges of the front panel are joined to the opposed side panels and a top edge of the rear panel is joined to a back edge of the roof panel.

9. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 1, wherein access to the interior of the golf cart is provided solely by separation between each of the side panels and the rear panel at their respective meeting edges.

10. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 9, including means for attaching the cover to the a golf cart by attachment means attached to the cover and engageable with an edge of the golf cart.

11. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 1, wherein the rear panel is of sufficient size to cover a golf club compartment of the golf cart.

12. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 11, including an attachment means extending from the rear panel and engageable with a portion of the golf club compartment.

13. A cover for a golf cart of the type having a roof over a cabin section of the cart, wherein the cover rests on the roof, comprising:

a roof panel,

opposed side panels connected to the roof panel,

a front panel connected to the roof panel,

a rear panel connected to the roof panel, and

means for removably attaching each side panel to a handle on the side of the golf cart,

the side panels meeting the rear panel essentially at the corner of the cart where the sides meet the rear of the cart, the side panels being separated from the rear panel at said corner, such that (1) the side panels are liftable up along the side of the cart to provide access to the interior of the cart, and (2) the rear panel is liftable to cover a golf club compartment.

14. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 13, wherein the material of the cover is transparent.

15. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 13, wherein each side panel is attachable to a front fender well of a golf cart by an attachment means, each attachment means being attachable at one end to its respective side panel and attachable at its other end to the fender well of the golf cart.

16. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 15, wherein surgical tubing connects the two ends of the attachment means.

17. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 15, wherein the end of each attachment means attachable to the side panel includes a first part having a recess therein and a second part conforming to the shape of the recess and capable of being received and securely retained therein, and removable therefrom, while engaging the material of the side panel between the first and second parts, and the opposite end of the attachment means, constituting a hook engageable with the fender well of the golf cart.

18. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 13, including an attachment means for attaching the rear panel to the golf club compartment of the golf cart.

19. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 18, wherein the attachment means for attaching the rear panel to the golf club compartment comprises a first end having two parts which engage opposite sides of the rear panel to secure a portion of the rear panel thereto and a second end connectable to the golf club compartment, the two ends being connected together by a Bungee cord.

20. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 13, wherein the panels, to the extent that they are not joined to other panels as one piece, are connected together by double-sided adhesive tape.

21. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 20, wherein the material of the cover is approximately 6 mil vinyl.

22. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 21, wherein the cover may be folded into a compact shape of approximately $10\times12\times2.5$ inches.

23. A cover for a golf cart of the type having a roof over a cabin section of the cart, wherein the cover rests on the roof, comprising:

a roof panel,

opposed side panels connected to the roof panel,

a front panel connected to the roof panel, and

a rear panel connected to the roof panel,

the side panels being separated from the rear panel at the corner whereat they meet, access to the interior of the cart being solely at the separation between the side panels and rear panel, and

attachment means having two ends for attaching the side panels to a part of the cart, the first end of each attachment means being movable to be positionable at different locations on its respective side panel, and the second end including means for attachment to different edge locations on the cart.

24. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 23, wherein said attachment means includes, for each side panel, an attachment device comprising two ends and a flexible material extending therebetween, a first of said ends comprising a first part having a recess therein and a second part conforming to the shape of the recess, these two parts engaging a portion of the side panel securely retained therebetween, and the second end being engageable with an edge of a fender well of the golf cart.

25. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 24, wherein the flexible material is surgical tubing.

26. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 23, including means for removably attaching the side panels to handles on the side of the golf cart.

27. A cover for a golf cart of the type having a roof over a cabin section of the cart, wherein the cover rests on the roof, comprising:

a roof panel, opposed side panels, a front panel, and a back panel, all panels being formed from a lightweight material, and wherein those panels which are not formed as one piece with adjacent panels are joined to adjacent panels by using a double-sided adhesive tape.

28. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 27, wherein the material of the cover is transparent.

29. A cover for a golf cart of the type having a roof over a cabin section of the cart, wherein the cover rests on the roof, comprising:

a roof panel,

opposed side panels connected to the roof panel,

a front panel connected to the roof panel, and

a rear panel connected to the roof panel,

wherein the panels, to the extent that they are not joined to other panels as one piece, are connected together by double-sided adhesive tape,

the side panels meeting the rear panel essentially at the corner of the cart where the sides meet the rear of the cart, the side panels being separated from the rear panel at said corner, such that (1) the side panels are liftable up along the side of the cart to provide access to the interior of the cart, and (2) the rear panel is liftable to cover a golf club compartment.

30. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 29, wherein the material of the cover is approximately 6 mil vinyl.

31. A cover for a golf cart according to claim 30, wherein the cover may be folded into a compact shape of approximately $10 \times 12 \times 2.5$ inches.

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